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ABSTRACT

A study examined the effectiveness of a program designed to increase literature appreciation and recreational reading of intermediate grade students. Subjects, 460 students an all-black midwestern city, recorded the amount of time spent reading at home, were observed by their teachers during reading periods to evaluate on-task behavior, were required to read in three additional literary genres, and were encouraged to increase their recreational reading to 100 minutes per week. Results indicated that: (1) 74% of the students engaged in at least 15 minutes of reading at home per day; (2) 86% of the assignments given during reading periods were completed; (3) 84% of the students read in at least three additional genres; and (4) 90% of the students developed voluntary reading behavior and increased the number of minutes read per week to 100. (Five tables of data are included; 29 references, the survey instruments, and sample reading logs are appended.) (RS)

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Increasing Literature Appreciation and Recreational Reading Behavior of Intermediate Grade Students

by

Yvette L. Chisom

Cluster XXIV

A Practicum II Report Presented to the ED.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1989

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This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Melvyn T. Cornelius
Melvyn T. Cornelius, Ed.D.

School Principal
Title

6311 S. Calumet
Address

Chicago, IL. 60637
City and State

May 30, 1989
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Yvette L. Chisom under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

June 25, 1989 — Muriel L. Lundy
Date of Final Approval of Report — Muriel L. Lundy, Ed.D., Adviser

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ABSTRACT

Increasing Literature Appreciation and Recreational Reading Behavior of Intermediate Grade Students. Chisom, Yvette, L., 1989: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood.
Descriptors: Recreational Reading / Reading Appreciation / Literature Appreciation / Time On Task / Parent Role / Parent Participation

This practicum was designed to increase the amount of reading accomplished by intermediate grade students. The goals were to encourage students to read for at least fifteen minutes per day at home, display on-task reading behavior by completing reading assignments, begin reading in at least three additional genre, and develop voluntary reading behavior by increasing the number of minutes read per week.

After hearing numerous complaints about the difficulty of getting students to participate in the mandatory recreational reading period, the writer interviewed the school librarian and surveyed teachers, students, and parents. She then shared strategies gleaned from the literature with her colleagues and began a campaign to promote reading in the intermediate grades. The strategies employed included using teachers as role models, recreational reading logs, contests, art and writing projects, literary activities, oral and dramatic presentations, and a literature genre checklist.

The results were mostly positive. The home reading objective fell short of the 80% expected by -6.3%. The on-task reading behavior objective fared much closer to the standard of 90%, with a difference of only -4.5%. The percentage of students who began reading in additional genre exceeded the writer's expected 80% by +3.6%. The percentage of students who developed voluntary reading behavior matched the expected 90% exactly. Since the last two objectives met or exceeded the standards and were not teacher-directed, the data suggests that students are best motivated to read through peer interactions and self-directed activities.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The writer teaches in a large metropolitan city in the Midwest. The community surrounding the school was once a thriving retail district, but gang activity during the 1960's and '70's drove most of the middle class residents and businesses away.

Residents in the community are mostly in the lower SES category with 80% to 88% being below the poverty level. The residences are rental apartment buildings, housing projects, and Section 8 housing.

The school has one Headstart class, four kindergartens and first grades, five second, third, and fourth grades, and four fifth and sixth grades. In addition, there are two special education classes and a computer lab. All 756 students are Black, and the school is part of the Effective Schools Program. The number of students achieving at grade level is between 35% and 40%. Of the 39 teachers employed at the school, about half have

education beyond the bachelor's level, and have taught an average of ten to twelve years.

Writer's Role and Responsibilities

The writer is certified to teach grades three through eight, and has an endorsement to teach special education. Most of her teaching experience has been in the intermediate grades. This year the writer is teaching sixth grade and sponsoring student council.

The writer co-authored a proposal which received a federal grant. This proposal project involved all staff, parents, and students who wanted to participate. The group worked to upgrade interpersonal relations, improve morale, beautify the school building and grounds, foster school spirit, and feed the hungry in the community.

As a voluntary extra-curricular activity, the writer teaches creative writing. Excerpts from many of her students' essays were published in a local newspaper. One of the writer's students was a winner in the state Young Author's Contest. In addition, the writer initiated, developed, and produced a school newspaper. For this effort, she received a commendation from the city's general superintendent of schools.

Last year, the writer implemented a highly successful parent volunteer program. She also helped to write and implement a school discipline code.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The reading curriculum guide for the writer's school system calls for one hour of recreational reading per week, but the students were resistant.

Intermediate grade students did not engage in recreational reading behavior or demonstrate an appreciation for literature. The problem was that intermediate grade students did not read for pleasure.

Problem Documentation

The writer had documented the existence of this problem in several ways. The Teacher Survey (see Appendix A) indicated that only about one-third of the students were on-task during recreational reading, and chose recreational reading as a free-choice activity.

An interview with the school librarian (see Appendix B) revealed that less than half of the students completed

library assignments. She also stated that students always selected the same kind of books and resisted reading different genre.

The Reading Interest Survey (Appendix C) showed that more than half the students did not like to read. The reported number of minutes read per week ranged from zero to sixty, with the average being seventeen. Only about one-eighth of the students belonged to book clubs or had magazine subscriptions.

Responses on the Parent Questionnaire (Appendix D) revealed that on average, parents and their children only read together twice a month. Parents only took their children to the library about three times a year; and most homes didn't have books and magazines on the child's reading level.

Analysis of the Causes

One of the major causes of the problem was the absence of recreational reading role models. While parents reported spending an average of two and one-half hours per week reading, they didn't seem to encourage their children to read for pleasure. Parents reported that they only read with their children about twice a month, only took them to

to the library three times in a year, and did not have reading materials in the house on the child's level.

In addition, teachers themselves had not been models. They reported only reading aloud to their classes and/or telling them stories bimonthly. Students didn't often see their teachers engaged in recreational reading because teachers reported that there was no time. Teachers did not report on any special materials or activities to entice their students to the library corner in the classroom; and field trips were not generally reading-related.

The school librarian reported that students saw the library period as playtime. The library period is only forty minutes, and the period was almost half over by the time the children were settled. Library activities were not reinforced by teachers in the classroom.

More than half of the students reported that they didn't like to read. Many of them stated that reading was boring, and that books were either too hard, too long, or both.

The Related Literature

Huck (1979) wrote that the movement toward back-to-basics with its emphasis on skills has been

detrimental to the development of reading for pleasure. She also stated that watching television robs children of the time they might otherwise spend on recreational reading at home.

According to this author, some of the benefits of pleasure reading are: linguistic and cognitive development, increased vocabulary and comprehension, increased compassion for and understanding of others, and a more active imagination.

There are positive correlations between school success and voluntary reading according to Morrow (1987). She stated that recreational reading leads to high levels of vocabulary development and comprehension, as well as increased reading achievement on standardized tests.

She went on to say that children who are exposed to literature develop higher level language structures, gather background knowledge, and understand story structure.

Odland (1979) observed that when there is no evidence of reading skills being used, reading programs are seen as incomplete. In disagreement, she stressed that literature contributes to the personal growth, enrichment, and use of imagination in children.

She felt that a well designed literature program can teach values, certain topics such as courage, friendship,

or death, sensitivity to literary artistry, and critical judgement.

Fillion (1981) suggested that teachers may unknowingly discourage recreational reading by assigning inappropriate selections, and directing discussions exclusively on recall of information. The author emphasized that instead of being passive receivers of information, children should be the questioners and discussers of what has been read. They should reflect on the reading experience, and consider what it means to them.

The teacher's duty, according to Harker (1980), is to encourage children to read literature in order to form bridges between the real world and the imaginative worlds found in literature. The teacher should develop linguistic awareness through the use of listening and speaking activities such as reading aloud to children and choral reading.

The author went on to say that children should read the literature that they like. They should be encouraged to discuss this literature with their teacher as well as their peers, and come up with as many interpretations as possible.

Grubaugh (1986) wrote that sustained silent reading (SSR) allows students to practice their reading skills,

develop an appreciation for reading, broaden their backgrounds, and build a knowledge base.

He added that the practice of reading results in improved writing. An additional benefit is that children learn to solve their problems by reading about children faced with similar problems.

In order to develop children's interest in reading, Gray (1979) felt that teachers must become familiar with children's literature. By the third grade, children's attitudes about reading are fully established; but one way to motivate interest is to read to them as a regular part of the school day. These sessions help to increase vocabulary, develop listening skills, and acquaint children with different language patterns.

A second way to gain their interest is to allow children to select and read books that interest them. The author believed that most teachers inhibit reading for enjoyment by overteaching reading skills.

Blake (1979) offered suggestions for starting an SSR program. She suggested that teachers read everything they can find on the subject. Next, discuss the program with the children, and establish rules. Teachers should serve as models by showing how much they enjoy reading. Teachers should share exciting features from their own books, and

encourage the students to do the same. Children should be encouraged to do book reports, dramatizations, dioramas, etc.

She believed that SSR allows students to gain a sense of responsibility, and that peer pressure would motivate disruptive students to behave during the reading period.

An activity for children who resisted reading was devised by Bilby (1981). She had her students bring in the best book they had ever read, and give a five minute presentation on it. After the presentation, the class asked the speaker questions, and rated their interest in the book on a scale from one to five.

The author reported that this activity encouraged students to talk about books, and read those that they might enjoy. As a result, more students enjoyed the books they selected, and were anxious to repeat the activity.

Anderson, Higgins, & Wurster (1985) gave suggestions for helping children choose appropriate books. Teachers are encouraged to teach children to select books based on their interests and reading ability, avoid making personal judgements, read aloud books within the reading range of low achievers, provide a wide range of reading materials and encourage circulation, and give importance to stories in short books for the benefit of children who resist

longer selections.

Dorrell (1987) suggested using comic books to attract students, and interest reluctant readers. He reported that for decades, children have rated comics as favorite reading materials.

He wrote that the NEA supports the use of educational comics to confront issues such as drug and sexual abuse. He went on to say that if schools provide materials that children like, more reading will take place. As a result, reading skills will improve.

Similarly, Koenke (1981) suggested using comic books as recreational reading material for stimulating reading interests and reading skill instruction. He wrote that Norse and Greek mythologies are used extensively, and comics are suitable for studying dialect and characterization. Some comics are also literate, sophisticated in terms of narrative and philosophy, and morally and ethically responsible.

Further, he added that comics increase vocabulary and comprehension, and provide examples of "synopsis, dramatic fiction, exposition, flashback, foreshadowing, plot structures, climax, resolution, sub-plot, double foil, irony, symbolism, allegory, metaphor, pathetic fallacy, personification, and allusion" (p. 594).

Poole (1981) encouraged her students to read by using several methods. She kept a wide variety of books in the classroom, conducted class literature discussions, talked about good books, made obvious her own enjoyment of books, recommended books to her students, and assigned book reports.

The books were to be read at home, and reported on in class. Each report focused on a skill taught in class, such as character analysis, conflict, setting, etc.

Manley & Simon (1980) reported on a program that assigned home reading activities each night of the week. Teachers made time for SSR in the classroom, and put up bulletin boards emphasizing reading.

Every morning students told what their families had done the previous night. The students earned points for doing the suggested acitvities, on-task SSR behavior, going to the library, not watching television, and returning reading log sheets. The point totals were recorded on a huge thermometer in the school lobby.

As a result of the program, family members became aware of how little they read for pleasure, participated in family activities, and took time to talk to each other.

A field based research study on voluntary reading was reported by Morrow (1985). During this study, teachers in

the experimental rooms engaged the children in literary activities such as reading aloud, story discussion, dramatizations, establishing library corners, having children create their own books, showing movie stories, etc.

She reported that at the end of the study several things had taken place. Students increased the use of the literature center during free time. The classroom practices and attitudes of teachers had changed. The social nature of the literary activities provided an environment for cooperative learning. Students now had the opportunity to practice skills learned during the regular reading period.

Manning & Manning (1984) conducted research to determine which recreational reading models increased reading achievement as well as encouraged children to read for pleasure. The models used in this study were SSR, peer interaction, and individual conferences between teacher and student about what was read.

The statistical data showed that the SSR group had significantly lower gains in reading achievement and attitude. The peer interaction and conference groups scored much higher in measurement of reading attitude. The peer interaction group made much greater gains in

reading achievement than the other two.

Brett & Huck (1982) wrote that children's books should have standards, and be subjected to literary criticism. This criticism falls into three categories: work-centered, child-centered, and issue-centered.

The work-centered category emphasizes the importance of setting, plot, theme, style, and character. The child-centered category aims to create a connection between literature and psychology. Knowledge of child development should be related to children's literary tendencies. The issue-centered category emphasizes the sociological aspects. While authors are responsible for accurately reporting social situations, they should restore moral order by indicating disapproval of negative philosophies and practices.

In summary, it is widely accepted that the more a child reads, the better reader that child will become. While it is certainly true that teachers should provide proper experiences for learning, learning cannot be forced in from the outside; learning occurs when a change takes place within the individual. Because of the innumerable benefits, it is incumbent upon teachers to find ways to entice children to read.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of General Goals

The writer's goals were to increase the recreational reading behavior of intermediate grade students, and cause them to demonstrate an appreciation for literature.

Behavioral Expectations

After implementation, the writer expected certain changes to have occurred. The first objective was that at least 80% of the 460 parents would encourage fifteen minutes of home reading per day. This was measured by means of the Recreational Reading Log (see Appendix E).

Objective two was that 460 pupils would be on-task during reading periods, with 90% of assignments being completed. This objective was measured through teacher observation.

The third objective was that at least 80% of the 460 pupils would begin reading in at least three additional

genre. This was measured by the Literature Genre Checklist (see Appendix F).

The fourth objective was that 90% of 460 pupils would develop voluntary reading behavior, and increase the number of minutes read per week to 100. This was measured by teacher observation as well as a Post-Implementation Reading Interest Survey (see Appendix G).

Evaluation Instruments

The writer measured her objectives by an increase in home reading time, on-task reading behavior, reading in additional genre, and voluntary reading behavior.

To measure the amount of home reading time, a Recreational Reading Log (see Appendix E) was used. On this log, parents indicated the date, time spent reading, number of pages read, and the title of the book or story. The parent then signed the log, and had the child return it to the writer. The standard of achievement was that at least 80% of the students would read at least fifteen minutes per day.

Measurement of the next objective, on-task behavior during reading periods, was evaluated by teacher observation, with 90% of assignments completed as the

standard of achievement.

The third objective, pupils having read in additional genre, was measured by the Literature Genre Checklist (see Appendix F). The standard of achievement was that 80% of pupils have read in three additional genre.

Voluntary reading behavior, the final objective, was measured through teacher observation as well as the Post-Implementation Reading Interest Survey (see Appendix G). The standard of achievement was that 90% of pupils would increase their reading to at least 100 minutes per week.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solution

The purpose of this practicum was to design a program that increased recreational reading behavior and literature appreciation of intermediate grade students. Numerous suggestions for achieving these goals were gleaned from the literature.

Grubaugh (1986) advocated setting aside a time when everyone in the school reads. He stressed having SSR take place at the same time everyday, allowing children to select their own materials, and not tolerating any interruptions.

He gave suggestions for convincing administrators, teachers, and students of the benefits. Administrators should be made aware of research showing achievement gains as a result of SSR. Teachers should be surveyed and asked for their input. Campaigns should be started to get students motivated. A wide range of materials must be provided so that even low achievers can have successful

reading experiences.

The school principal, being knowledgeable about the benefits of recreational reading, gave the writer permission to implement a reading program in the intermediate grades. The writer's colleagues were looking forward to participating.

A useful strategy in implementing a school program is to involve the parents. Nevett (1981) devised a course in children's literature for parents. The first class gave a brief overview on the history of children's literature. The next class focused on favorite authors and stories, and what children find enjoyable at their different stages of development. The third session focused on modern fiction and what books are popular at various age levels. The fourth session was devoted to answering parent's questions about things not covered in previous classes.

Parents responded favorably to the course, stating they had gained strategies for encouraging their children to read.

The writer had every intention of making parents an important part of the program. While she did not intend to teach parents a formal course in children's literature, she planned to hold meetings with them to suggest materials and ways that reading could be encouraged at home.

Burgess (1985) designed a program to increase the frequency of recreational reading done at home. The program began with an explanatory letter to parents. Each child was to read for at least ten minutes at home. The parent recorded reading frequency on the independent reading calendar. Children were rewarded with tokens, with those children who accumulated at least twenty-four tokens at the end of the month, being given stickers and erasers.

She reported that as a result of her home reading program, the frequency of recreational reading increased and children began selecting books by certain authors because of their writing styles.

The writer designed a home component of the program that asked parents to fill out a log of their children's reading at home. As incentive, children who returned completed logs were to be rewarded.

Gersten (1981) found that book fairs are useful in motivating students to read. He saw a book fair as a sure way to get even the most resistant students to realize that reading has a place in their lives. Among his suggestions for holding a successful book fair are: setting a date before a holiday to entice gift-giving, holding the fair in a convenient place, having art classes make posters and flyers, and forming a committee to select appropriate

books. The writer planned to hold a book fair in December.

A language arts program for low achieving students was devised by Kristo (1983). She assigned sustained silent reading periods during which she took an empty student seat and engaged in SSR herself to become a model. At the end of the period, she and the students discussed their books.

Anothef part of the program involved reading aloud to the students. During these purposeful reading periods, students identified new vocabulary words, and answered questions relating to interpretation and evaluation.

She reported that this program was successful because children moved from passive listening to active participation. Improved writing skills, oral communication skills, and comprehension of content area subjects were added benefits.

As part of the implementation, the writer planned to have the teachers involved become recreational reading role models and read to their classes everyday.

Morrow (1979) wrote that creative storytelling is even more exciting than reading aloud to children. She wrote that storytelling allows the teacher to be more creative, and stay closer to the audience. Among the techniques she suggested are: flannel boards, props, puppets, chalk talks, photography, movie making, sound stories, cut stories, and

origami stories.

Morrow (1987) conducted a program to increase recreational reading behavior. The two main components of the program were the use of a well-designed library corner, and a reading program that included different kinds of literature activities.

The library corner was comfortably furnished and stocked with many kinds of reading materials, audio-visual equipment, manipulatives, and supplies for carrying out the literary activities. Children were encouraged to check out books to take home.

The reading program was divided into four parts. There were ten minutes of Quiet Book Reading. Next was the Teacher Directed Literature Activities presented to the whole group. Free Choice Time lasted for half an hour and allowed children to select materials to be used independently or with a friend. The recreational reading period ended with a Summary of the Day in which the group discussed what they had done.

During the inservice training sessions the writer was to have with the other intermediate grade teachers, a comfortable well-stocked library center was to be discussed at length. Fortunately audio-visual equipment and supplies were abundant in the school. Reading materials were to be

rotated on a routine basis.

Limbacher (1981) suggested using films to teach literature. He wrote that using various media to present a story provides an interesting way to motivate students to think while they read and write. He believed that showing films in the classroom provided more stimulation than most other kinds of classroom activities. Many of these literary filmstrips come with skills activities, a study guide, paperback texts, and evaluation materials.

Literature films and filmstrips are among the materials mentioned earlier that were available in the school, but not generally used. The writer intended to inventory these materials, and prepare activities for their use in the intermediate grade classrooms.

Book talks provide another strategy in motivating children to read. Dwyer (1983) divided a book talk into five parts. First, the presenter enthusiastically introduced the book by giving the title and author, and used props if necessary to create interest. Next, the presenter described the main characters and setting to lead up to the section to be read. Third, the presenter read a short but appealing section, without giving away too much of the plot or ending. Next, the presenter closed and entertained questions from the audience. Finally, the

audience rated the presenter on the lead-in, enthusiasm, fluency, volume, and eye contact.

Post (1979) advocated the oral interpretation of literature. He wrote that his Readers Theatre was successful because most children enjoy group projects, careful assignment of parts allows low achieving students to be successful, and performing in puppet shows allows shy children to participate since the emphasis is taken from them.

When a narrative is read aloud, basic elements of a story are enhanced. Reading aloud makes nonfiction prose more interesting. Reading poetry aloud enhances appreciation of language in verse, imagery, figurative language, and symbolism. It also spotlights literary devices such as alliteration, assonance, repetition, onomatopoeia, rhythm, and rhyme.

The author believed that oral presentations provide a fun way to learn literature and sharpen student's reading skills at the same time.

Criscuolo (1979) described activities that proved successful in motivating children to read. Invented Circumstances allowed children to write creatively about what they had read. The Swap Shop period allowed them to share their writing. The Book Catalog was a compilation

of illustrations and book synopses. Feelings Unlimited and Secret Identities taught the children about characterization and emotion. Bag Props allowed children to dramatize stories, while Armchair Travelers allowed children to learn about unfamiliar places. Book Mates activities allowed the children to write and illustrate their own original stories.

The writer intended to incorporate the literary activities of the three preceding authors into her recreational reading program.

Bagford (1985) advocated an individualized approach to reading. He suggested forming book clubs which meet regularly for book sharing activities. Next, teachers should set a reading goal and influence their students to achieve it. Third, groups of students should be encouraged to do research on topics of interest. Next, book swaps and auctions should be held. Finally, students should write their own books.

A program which was highly successful in motivating students to read was developed by Gitelman & Rasberry (1986). They organized a contest designed to promote recreational reading and parent participation. The five components of the contest were home reading, art projects, writing projects, book reports, and oral presentation based

upon books read.

These activities were judged by a panel of teachers and administrators. The winners received books, but all participants were awarded prizes. The contest created schoolwide enthusiasm, and teacher's attitudes about recreational reading showed a positive change.

Kettel (1981) reported of a game show called the Reading Road Quiz. This televised contest allowed schools and individual students to win paperback books. At contest time, a moderator gave clues relating to the books, and contestants rang in to give the titles.

The author reported that the contest was successful for several reasons: the careful selection of literature to be read, students not competing could still win prizes, and there was excitement in seeing friends on television. The author also stated that as a result of the show, motivation to read moved from extrinsic to intrinsic.

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

After evaluating strategies gleaned from the literature, the writer devised a solution plan. The groundwork for this practicum had already been laid in that the principal had asked the writer and the other committee

chairpersons to find a way to promote recreational reading in the school.

The first step was to provide inservice training for teachers. This training made teachers aware of their role as recreational reading role models, offered strategies for encouraging students, suggested literary activities and field trips, and provided ideas for effective room libraries.

The next step involved the parents. They were asked to encourage reading at home and to complete the Recreational Reading Log (see Appendix E).

Following that was a campaign to motivate the students. Posters and bulletin boards were put on display throughout the school. As further motivation, a book fair was held.

The fourth step was to hold assembly presentations in which students shared what they had read by means of dramatics, artwork, and oral and written presentations. This strategy gave participating youngsters the opportunity to show what they had learned, and served to inspire those who were still reluctant.

Next, the students were encouraged to join children's book clubs, and form their own literary groups based upon common interests.

Finally, contests were held to allow students to gain added recognition.

Report of Action Taken

The solution used in this practicum was the implementation of strategies to increase literature appreciation and recreational reading behavior of intermediate grade students.

This process was begun toward the end of the last school year when teachers were weary of trying to force students to participate in the mandatory recreational reading periods. The writer interviewed the school librarian, and surveyed students, teachers, and parents. A review of the data clearly showed that most students rarely read for pleasure. Since the recreational reading period was now a permanent fixture, solutions had to be sought.

The writer did an extensive literature search to learn how others had solved similar problems. The abundance of information let the writer know that her's was not an isolated problem.

When the current school year began, the writer inventoried the recreational reading materials, films, filmstrips, tapes and records, and categorized them

according to age and ability levels.

The student council was instrumental in advertising the year-long reading campaign. They assisted the writer in coming up with the name Project READING (Reading Ensures Achievement, Development, Imagination, New knowledge, and Growth). They posted flyers throughout the school, and shared information learned at council meetings with their classmates. The writer made them aware of their roles as representatives of the reading program.

Parents were sent letters explaining the reading campaign. They were informed of the objectives, activities involved, ways in which they could be of assistance, and Recreational Reading Logs. Parent volunteers offered to walk groups of students to the neighborhood library after school hours and on weekends.

The writer began the inservice sessions by sharing information gleaned from the literature with her colleagues. The importance of attractive, well-stocked library corners was discussed at length. The teachers then made their library corners as comfortable and inviting as possible by providing area rugs and throw pillows, displaying attractive reading bulletin boards and posters, frequently rotating materials, and providing supplies and equipment for literary activities.

The next topic discussed was how field trips could be used to enrich the reading program. Two major newspapers in this city welcome student groups to their headquarters. The writer reminded the teachers of how fascinated students become with reading newspapers after these trips. Also, the numerous productions based on literature classics and the lives of famous people were discussed as well. The teachers made arrangements to take at least three reading-related field trips, and allow the exchange of field trip experience stories between classrooms.

The third inservice session topic was since children learn by example, teachers would have to become role models and advocates for reading. The teachers began to fully participate in the SSR period. They dramatically read aloud to students and told them stories. They began to use nonverbal methods for conveying their enjoyment of reading such as smiling, laughing occasionally, and turning the pages with enthusiasm. The teachers followed the writer's suggestion to sometimes interrupt the class and say, "I want to share what I'm reading with you." This lead to a discussion of the literary activities that were to be done after the reading.

The first step was to get students thinking and talking about books. The writer gave the teachers several

suggestions for oral presentations. The teachers had the children do oral book reviews in which they advertised their favorite books and encouraged their classmates to read them. They did book chats in which they told the class about the exciting parts of the books they had read without giving away the ending. This enticed the others to want to read the same books. Another technique was oral book reports in which students described the setting, characters, and conflict of the story. The student then asked classmates to guess how the conflict was resolved. Classmates were then asked to read and find out if their solutions matched the author's. Another oral presentation strategy used was the narrative. Students pretended to be their favorite book characters, and then told the class about their lives.

Once students felt comfortable with giving oral presentations, the time was right to expand the concept. Students began to present prop stories using visual aids to tell their stories. They worked in pairs to present "interviews" conducted with literary characters. The prop story technique was expanded even further when students made puppets and scenery to recount events in stories and books. At this point, students began writing scripts and dramatizing what they read.

The next area of literary activities the writer shared with her colleagues was the use of art projects to enrich the reading experience. Teachers had their students draw posters advertising their favorite books. These posters were displayed in the classroom as well as in the corridor. Students also created book jackets, and illustrated their favorite parts of books using a variety of art media and an eclectic mix of materials. They created dioramas depicting the settings, and picture books illustrating the action. They rewrote books in comic book form which served as a segue for the writing activities which followed.

The writer emphasized the connection between reading and writing to her colleagues. She suggested numerous writing activities to expand knowledge gained from reading. The students wrote prologues and epilogues for the books they read. They rewrote stories using different settings, conflict resolution strategies, and endings. As students began to understand character traits and motives, they wrote letters and diary entries that those characters might have written. As reading sophistication developed, students identified literary devices, analyzed literary style, and wrote critiques. Students also wrote additional episodes and chapters for their favorite books. The culminating writing project was that the students wrote

and illustrated their own books. These books were on display near the gymnasium.

The next phase of the inservice training sessions centered on activities that would allow for more interaction between classrooms and recognition for outstanding students. These activities included assemblies, book clubs, a book fair, and contests.

At the regularly scheduled monthly assembly programs, the students were able to share their reading experiences with a much larger audience. The same activities done in the classrooms were now done on the stage. Several of these productions stand out in the writer's mind.

After reading the biography of Bill Cosby, some students decided to do an original episode of "The Cosby Show". A committee was elected to write the script; and the cast of characters was expanded so that each child who wanted to participate had a part in the play.

Another example occurred when ten prints by famous artists were donated to the school by the Sears Roebuck Foundation. Several students read the biographies of these artists and wrote speeches about their lives and works. They put on an assembly for representatives from the Foundation and the Art Institute. The program was well received by these representatives, who wrote letters of

praise to the school.

Other biographies inspired activity as well. During Black History Month, the students wrote "rap songs" to highlight the achievements of famous African-Americans. Reading biographies of people they admired enticed them to read even more about their heros. For posterity, the students wrote their own autobiographies which were displayed outside the gymnasium.

Several publishing companies regularly send book flyers and order blanks to the school, so many students were enticed to join book clubs. They even started informal literary groups based upon common interests.

A book fair was held in December to encourage giving books as gifts. The librarian described the fair as one of the most successful one's she had seen at the school. Sales totaled more than two thousand dollars. After these books and the ones from the book clubs were read, shared with classmates, and activities completed, Swap Meets were held so there could be an exchange of books between classrooms.

The idea of holding contests was well received by the teachers. Because of the number of low achieving students, the writer thought it best if the chances for winning were based more upon participation than ability. For the first

four contests, one winner was selected from each classroom. For these, a student could not win more than once, but only those who participated in all contests would be eligible to enter the grand prize contest. Only two winners were chosen for that one.

A library card contest was held to encourage students to use the public library, thereby giving them even greater access to books. To enter, all students had to do was bring in their cards. Each of the intermediate teachers drew the name for their classrooms. The winners received boxes of thirty colored marking pens. The names of all contest entrants were posted on the third floor bulletin board.

The "Who Am I?" and "Where Did This Happen?" contest had students identify characters and stories found in books common to all intermediate classrooms. The teachers selected one winner from each of their rooms. The prizes were McDonald's food coupons. All contest participants names' were posted.

The third contest was held the week of spring vacation. To enter, students brought in a list of books read during that week, verified by a parent's signature. As with the first two contests, the teachers chose the winners from their own classes. The prizes were ballpoint

pens that write ten different fruit-scented colors. All book lists were posted outside the classroom doors.

The next contest was for writing poetry, prose, and/or narratives based upon the literary devices the students learned from reading literature. Selection of winners for this contest was more involved than previously. This time teachers chose from among the entries that displayed not necessarily the most talent, but rather the most effort. The winner from each classroom received a hand-held mini piano. Throughout the week, all participants read their work to their classmates during the lunch period.

The final contest was the result of an on-going project. At the beginning of implementation, students were told to start writing and illustrating their own books, incorporating the strategies and devices learned along the way. The teachers selected a judging committee from among themselves. All entries were displayed in the corridor between the gymnasium and the lunchroom. The two winners received watches which the writer herself had won in a raffle.

Even though officially Project READING has ended, enthusiasm and interest remain high. Students are still asking, "What are we going to do next?" To maintain spirit and motivation to read, the writer realizes that she will

have to continue these activities next school year.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Enrollment in the intermediate classrooms decreased from 460 to 403 students. This decrease was due to students transferring out of the school, reorganization of the school, and students waiting for placement into special education classrooms.

The results for each objective are shown in tables on the following pages. In Tables 1, 2, 4, and 5, the classrooms involved in the implementation are numbered from one to thirteen in the first column. The second column lists the grade level of each classroom; and the third column shows the homogeneous grouping level. The fourth column indicates the number of students enrolled in the classroom; while the fifth column gives the number of students meeting the objective. The sixth column shows the percentage of students who met the standard of achievement.

The first objective was that at least 80% of the parents would encourage fifteen minutes of home reading per

day. These results were measured by the Recreational Reading Log (see Appendix E), and tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1. Home Reading Results

Class	Grade	Level	# Students	# Students 80%+	Percent
1	4	High	31	25	80.6
2	4	Avg.	32	26	81.2
3	4	Avg.	31	23	74.1
4	4	Low	31	15	48.3
5	4	Low	30	17	56.6
6	5	High	31	25	80.6
7	5	Avg.	32	29	90.6
8	5	Low	31	19	61.2
9	5	Low	31	21	67.7
10	6	High	31	28	90.3
11	6	Avg.	32	26	81.2
12	6	Low	31	24	77.4
13	6	Low	29	20	68.9

The percentage of students meeting the objective was 73.7%, a difference of -6.3%. The writer has come up with three possible causes. Except for one instance, all high and average ability classrooms met or exceeded the standard of achievement. Perhaps more should have been done to

motivate the lower achieving students. Other possibilities are that steps could have been taken to gain more parental support, and to ensure that reading materials on the students' levels were available in the home.

The second objective, that pupils would be on task during reading periods with 90% of assignments being completed, was measured through teacher observation. The results of this objective are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. On-Task Reading Behavior

Class	Grade	Level	# Students	# Students 90%+	Percent
1	4	High	31	28	90.3
2	4	Avg.	32	29	90.6
3	4	Avg.	31	28	90.3
4	4	Low	31	26	83.8
5	4	Low	30	22	73.3
6	5	High	31	29	93.5
7	5	Avg.	32	28	87.5
8	5	Low	31	24	77.4
9	5	Low	31	23	74.1
10	6	High	31	29	93.5
11	6	Avg.	32	28	87.5
12	6	Low	31	25	80.6
13	6	Low	29	26	89.6

While the standard of achievement for this objective was not met, it came much closer than did objective one. The percentage of students demonstrating on-task reading behavior was 85.5%, a difference of only -4.5%. In this instance, two of the average achieving and all of the low achieving classrooms were below the writer's expectations. As with objective one, lack of motivation on the part of the low achieving students may have been a factor. Another possibility is that since students are instructed on grade level, the instructional levels might be different. A third factor may be low expectations on the part of teachers with lower achieving students.

The third objective, that at least 80% of pupils would begin reading in at least three additional genre, was measured by the Literature Genre Checklist (see Appendix F). Books were categorized by genre. Students were instructed to fill in the checklists, which teachers kept and compared over time. The results are summarized in Table 3 located on the following page.

The horizontal row of numbers at the top specifies the classrooms. The vertical column on the left lists the genre. The asterisk indicates genre read at the beginning. The + symbol indicates the additional genre read at the end of implementation. The "0" indicates no voluntary reading

in this genre. The table shows that each classroom met or exceeded the standard of achievement.

Table 3. Categories of Additional Genre

Classrooms	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Adventure	+	+	+	+	+	*	*	+	+	*	*	+	+
Mystery	*	+	+	+	0	+	+	+	0	*	+	+	+
Tall Tale	*	*	*	+	+	*	+	+	+	+	*	*	0
Fantasy	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Animal Story	*	*	*	*	*	+	*	*	*	+	+	*	*
Biography	+	+	+	+	+	*	+	+	+	*	*	+	+
Autobiography	+	+	+	+	+	*	+	+	+	*	*	+	+
Real. Fiction	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Sports	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Information	+	+	+	0	0	+	+	+	0	+	+	+	+
Humor	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

The percentage of students who began reading in additional genre is shown in Table 4 on the following page. The result was 83.6%, an increase of +3.6% above the writer's expectations. Through peer interactions and the

Table 4. Reading in Additional Genre

Class	Grade	Level	# Students	# Students 80%+	Percent
1	4	High	31	29	93.5
2	4	Avg.	32	30	93.7
3	4	Avg.	31	28	90.3
4	4	Low	31	24	77.4
5	4	Low	30	25	83.3
6	5	High	31	27	87.0
7	5	Avg.	32	29	90.6
8	5	Low	31	26	83.8
9	5	Low	31	24	77.4
10	6	High	31	28	90.3
11	6	Avg.	32	29	90.6
12	6	Low	31	19	61.2
13	6	Low	29	20	68.9

sharing activities, students were exposed to books they might have otherwise overlooked or ignored. While the percentage of the intermediate grade student population as a whole exceeded the standard, four lower achieving classrooms did not. Low student motivation and/or improper placement may have been contributing factors.

The fourth objective, that students would develop voluntary reading behavior and increase the number of

minutes read per week to 100 was measured by teacher observation and a Post-Implementation survey (see Appendix G). The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Voluntary Reading Behavior

Class	Grade	Level	# Students	# Students 90%+	Percent
1	4	High	31	29	93.5
2	4	Avg.	32	29	90.6
3	4	Avg.	31	28	87.0
4	4	Low	31	26	83.8
5	4	Low	30	27	90.0
6	5	High	31	29	93.5
7	5	Avg.	32	29	90.6
8	5	Low	31	28	90.3
9	5	Low	31	27	87.0
10	6	High	31	29	93.5
11	6	Avg.	32	29	90.6
12	6	Low	31	28	90.3
13	6	Low	29	26	89.6

The percentage of students who developed voluntary reading behavior was 90%, matching the writer's expectations exactly. Observations made by the teachers and the school librarian are further evidence of change.

The teachers reported that the choice of recreational reading and literary activities increased greatly as free-time selections. The school librarian stated that the classes settled down more quickly, and showed more interest in library activities.

Conclusions

The first objective was that at least 80% of the parents would encourage fifteen minutes of home reading per day. The objective fell short in that the percentage was 73.7%.

Possible explanations include lack of motivation, lack of encouragement, and the lack of suitable reading materials in the home. Also, the absence of rewards may be another explanation for logs not being returned

A useful strategy in implementing a home reading program is to involve the parents. Nevett (1981) devised a course in children's literature for parents. The classes focused on the history of children's literature, stories suitable for different stages of development, and what books are popular at various age levels.

Manley & Simon (1980) reported on a program that assigned home reading activities each night of the week.

Every morning students told what their families had done the previous night. The students earned points for doing the suggested activities, going to the library, and returning reading log sheets. The point totals were recorded on a thermometer in the school lobby.

Burgess (1985) designed a program to increase the frequency of recreational reading done at home. The program began with an explanatory letter to parents. Each child was to read for at least ten minutes at home. The parent recorded reading frequency on the independent reading calendar. Children were rewarded with tokens and prizes for returning completed logs.

The writer knows of the importance of parental support, but it was not the major focus. Perhaps she should have done more to involve parents and reward the students for returning completed logs.

The implications are that in the future, the writer should hold workshops for parents in order to: (a) teach them about children's literature; (b) motivate them to get their children to read; (c) encourage them to take their children to the library; (d) instill high, yet reasonable expectations; and (e) have appropriate reading materials in the home. Also, children who return completed logs should be rewarded.

The second objective, that pupils be on-task during reading periods with 90% of assignments being completed, resulted in a close 85.5%.

The writer has concluded that low motivation may have been a factor. Other explanations include the possibility of inappropriate instructional levels and assignments, and low expectations of teachers of lower achieving students.

Huck (1979) wrote that the movement toward back-to-basics with its emphasis on skills has been detrimental to the development of reading for pleasure.

Odland (1979) observed that when there is no evidence of reading skills being used, reading programs are seen as incomplete.

Bagford (1985) advocated an individualized approach to reading. He suggested forming book clubs for book sharing activities. Next, teachers should set a reading goal and influence their students to achieve it. He also believed that groups of students should be encouraged to do research on topics of interest.

The implications are that perhaps the assignments were too difficult, or for some reason unattractive to the students. In the future, the writer plans to give reading placement tests since the assigned grade level does not

always correlate with the instructional grade level. While the teaching of certain reading skills is mandated, skills should be somehow de-emphasized and more emphasis given to reading for pleasure. To the extent possible, reading should be more individualized.

Also, teachers of lower achievers tend not to expect too much. The writer intends to seek methods of raising teacher expectations, which hopefully will be sensed by the students. That way, students will feel more confident about attempting seemingly difficult tasks.

The third objective, that 80% of pupils would begin reading in at least three additional genre, was successful by 3.6% above what the writer expected.

The writer attributes the success to peer interactions. Students were exposed and attracted to books they might have otherwise overlooked or ignored. Another possible explanation is that the students were allowed to select their own reading materials.

Fillion (1981) suggested that teachers may unknowingly discourage recreational reading by assigning inappropriate selections, and directing discussions exclusively on recall of information. The author emphasized that instead of being passive receivers of information, children should be the questioners and

discussers of what was read. They should reflect on the reading experience, and consider what it means to them.

An activity for children who resisted reading was devised by Bilby (1981). She had her students bring in the best book they had ever read, and give a five minute presentation on it. After the presentation, the class asked the speaker questions, and rated their interest in the book.

The success of this objective shows that students may be more motivated to engage in peer and/or self-directed activities than teacher-directed ones. The implications are that more peer and self-directed acitvities should be allowed for reading as well as for the other subject areas.

The fourth objective, that 90% of students would develop voluntary reading behavior and increase the number of minutes read per week to 100, was also a success with exactly 90% meeting the standard.

The explanation for this objective being successful is that students were allowed to engage in the recreational reding activities of their choice.

Anderson, Higgins, & Wurster (1985) gave suggestions for helping children choose appropriate books. Teachers were encouraged to teach children to select books based on

their interests and reading ability, avoid making personal judgements, read aloud books within the reading range of low achievers, provide a wide range of reading materials and encourage circulation, and give importance to stories in short books for the benefit of children who resist longer selections.

A field based research study on voluntary reading was reported by Morrow (1985). During this study, teachers in the experimental rooms engaged the children in literary activities such as reading aloud, story discussion, dramatizations, establishing library corners, having children create their own books, showing movie stories, etc.

She reported that at the end of the study several things had taken place. Students increased the use of the literature center during free time; the social nature of the literary activities provided an environment for cooperative learning; and students now had the opportunity to practice skills learned during the regular reading period.

Blake (1979) suggested that teachers serve as models by showing children how much they themselves enjoy reading. She wrote that teachers should share exciting features from their own books, and encourage students to do the same.

The children should be encouraged to do book reports, dramatizations, dioramas, etc.

In conclusion, the success of these objectives implies that attractive reading corners, suitable materials, audio-visual equipment, manipulatives, sharing with peers, and literary activities eliminate the need to force students to engage in the recreational reading period.

Recommendations

As a result of this practicum project experience, the writer has five recommendations. First, reading placement tests should be given to determine students' instructional levels rather then teaching them at their assigned grade levels. Next, materials at these levels should be readily available in every classroom. Third, parents should be made aware of how much they can contribute by having high, yet reasonable expectations, providing support and taking their chidren to the library, and having reading materials on their childrens' levels present in the home. Fourth, teachers should be made fully aware of how their expectations are determining factors of student achievement and success. Finally, tangible as

as well as intangible rewards should be used to increase students' motivation.

Dissemination

Results of this practicum project will be disseminated in three ways. First, a copy of this report will be placed in the school library. Next, a copy will be given to the district instructional coordinator, who will then be asked to share it with the coordinators from the other districts. Finally, the writer plans to conduct a series of "Three R's Workshops" with three fellow cluster members who have done practicums on writing and math.

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APPENDIX A
TEACHER SURVEY

Responses from the 18 intermediate grade teachers are underlined.

1. What percentage of pupils are on-task during recreational reading?

   Between 33 and 37%

2. What percentage of pupils choose recreational reading as a free-choice activity?

   Between 30 and 35%

3. What teacher-directed and/or independent literary activities do your pupils engage in?

   The most common answers were book reports, artwork, and dramatizations.

4. How often do you read aloud to your class and/or tell them stories?

   The most often recurring answer was bimonthly.

5. How often do your pupils see you engaged in pleasure reading?

   The answers ranged from very seldom to never because there is no time for it.

6. Describe the library center in your classroom.

   All teachers reported that they had books and posters.

7. What reading-related field trips do you take your class on?

   The teachers stated at least one play during the school year and a trip to a newspaper publishing company.

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW WITH THE LIBRARIAN

Interview with the Librarian

The librarian's responses are underlined.

1. On the average, how many children in the intermediate grades complete assignments?

   The number varies with each class, but on the average between 30% and 40%.

2. What kinds of books do children generally select?

   The younger children prefer picture books and those they are familiar with from the primary grades. Older girls prefer romance stories, cookbooks, and teenage magazines. Older boys prefer books about sports and biographies of athletes. Both groups enjoy comic books, rock music and movie magazines.

3. How receptive are the children to the idea of reading different kinds of stories?

   They aren't. They complain about having to try anything new.

4. What are the problems as you see them?

   The library period is only 40 minutes and by the time the children settle down, the period is almost half over. The children see library time as playtime. Library activities are not reinforced in the classroom.

APPENDIX C
READING INTEREST SURVEY

Responses from the 460 intermediate grade students are underlined.

1. Do you like to read? yes-137 no-223

   Why or why not?

   The yes respondents stated that reading is fun, or that reading helps you learn. The no respondents reported that reading is boring, and that the books are either too hard, too long, or both.

2. About how many minutes a week do you read just for fun?

   The answers ranged from 0 to 60. The average was 17.

3. What activities do you do that go along with stories you read?

   The most common answers were drawing pictures, making things, or trying recipes.

4. Do you belong to any book clubs, or have magazine subscriptions?

   13.8% reported that they did.

APPENDIX D
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Responses from the 396 parents who participated.

1. About how much time does your child spend reading for pleasure during an average week?

   The average time was one hour.

2. About how much time do you spend reading for pleasure during an average week?

   The average time was two and one-half hours.

3. How often do you and your child read together?

   The average answer was twice a month.

4. How often do you take your child to the library?

   Most answers indicated about three times a year. Interestingly, this happens most often during the summer.

5. About how many books and magazines do you have at home on your child's reading level?

   The numbers ranged from 0 to 25. The average answer was 7.

APPENDIX E
RECREATIONAL READING LOG

Dear Parents,

Please fill in the date, time spent reading, number of pages read, and the title. Upon completion, kindly sign this log and return it to me. Thank you

DATE	TIME	NUMBER OF PAGES	TITLE OF BOOK OR STORY

APPENDIX F
LITERATURE GENRE CHECKLIST

Literature Genre Checklist

NAME: _____ DATES: _____ to _____

Adventure									
Mystery									
Tall Tale									
Fantasy									
Animal Story									
Biography									
Autobiography									
Realistic Fiction									
Sports									
Information									
Humor									
Other									

APPENDIX G
POST-IMPLEMENTATION READING SURVEY

Post-Implementation Reading Survey

Responses from the 403 intermediate grade students are underlined.

1. Do you read at least 100 minutes a week?

yes-363 no-40

2. Tell why you do or do not like to read.

The positive respondents stated that reading is fun, helps them learn, and that they can do activities with what they read. The negative respondents reported that reading is boring.

3. What activities do you do that go along with stories you read?

The most common answers were art, writing, telling friends about their books, acting out, and puppet shows.

4. Do you belong to any book clubs, or have magazine subscriptions?

86.1% reported that they did.